

ANN HRAYCHUCK

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

March 3, 2010

Testimony of Rep. Ann Hraychuck
Before the Senate Committee on Rural Issues, Biofuels, and Information Technology
Regarding Senate Bill 528

Good morning, Chairman Kreitlow and committee members. I appreciate having the opportunity to speak with you about Senate Bill 528 which establishes electronic voting procedures for cooperatives.

Currently, cooperative board elections take place at annual meetings and voting is done in-person. Some co-ops also provide mail-in ballots for their absentee members. Senate Bill 528 gives cooperatives and their members the option of voting electronically.

Electronic voting is voting online via email or website. For example, an absent cooperative member would be able to vote for a director by electronic means through a specialized program. The cooperative would be able to identify that it is a member who is casting a vote as members would be provided a login ID and password.

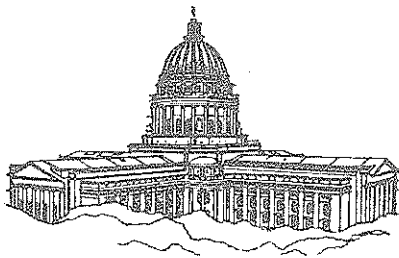
An increasing number of cooperative members prefer to interact via the internet and many pay their bills online. This convenience certainly could apply to director elections, resulting in improved member participation and decreased cost as less will be spent on postage. For rural communities, this is a wonderful option to increase participation for members that would otherwise have to drive long distances to get to their annual meeting.

Online voting can utilize pictures and video stream about candidates, provide background information as well as create greater transparency to the election process.

To be clear, this bill does not mandate anything. Each board would still need to amend their bylaws to allow electronic ballots for their particular cooperative if they decided this is an alternative they would like to pursue.

This was an idea that was brought to my attention by Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative and is similar to a law that the State of Minnesota has enacted.

I would like to thank Senator Taylor for her work on SB 528 and thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.



LENA C. TAYLOR

Wisconsin State Senator • 4th District

HERE TO SERVE YOU!

Testimony of Senator Lena C Taylor

SB 528 E-Voting for Coops

Committee on Rural Issues, Biofuels, and Informational Technology

Wednesday, March 3, 2010

Honorable Chairman Kreitlow and members of the committee,

Thank you for taking testimony today on SB 528 which permits electronic voting by members of a cooperative. I am pleased to join and author this legislation with Rep. Ann Hraychuck of Balsam Lake.

SB 528 makes a simple change to increase voting and participation in cooperatives around Wisconsin. As technology advances, Wisconsin has many antiquated laws, one of which I believe is the prohibition against using electronic communication in voting. SB 528 would allow a cooperative to permit electronic voting on a motion.

This allowance for electronic voting is subject to the restrictions of the cooperative's bylaws. If the cooperative does not allow absent persons to vote, a person may not use electronic means to do so. However, if the cooperative wants to allow absent members to vote on a website or by email, then this bill has removed the prohibition we have placed before them. Safeguards are kept for the cooperative's integrity by continuing to ban a proxy vote on this electronic voting method.

This is a simple bill but one that will allow cooperatives to move forward to use technology to include absent members in meetings. Cooperatives are built on the strength of their members, and this bill will help to involve all their members. I encourage your support of this legislation.